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IBSEN'S SANKTHANSNATTEN*

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Sankthansnatten (*Eventyrcomedie i 3 Acter*, 1852, *Efterladte Skrifter*, I, p. 373-432) was the first fruit of Ibsen's literary activity as theater-poet at Bergen. This little work contains much that is interesting in its bearing upon Ibsen's early literary development in the 50's. It is, therefore, with a view to ascertaining how far the work is really significant in this regard that the following paper is offered.**

Henrik Jæger, who knew the piece only in outline from the account given of the performance by T. Blanc (*Norges første nationale Scene*, pp. 138, 150), was of the opinion that the work had no more prominent place in the author's development than that of a mere exercise.¹

Since Jæger's time, however, a very different conclusion has been reached. The real significance of *Sankthansnatten* in Ibsen's poetry was first pointed out by a Frenchman, J. Lescofier, in the *Revue Germanique* (1905, pp. 298-306). Lescofier's article is very brief and leaves much to be desired in method of treatment, but one of the real contributions he made, was to point out in *Sankthansnatten* the analytic type of dramatic construction,² which was soon to appear again in *Fru Inger til Østraat* (1857) and finally to become the marked characteristic of Ibsen's dramatic technique.

**A somewhat fuller discussion of this subject was presented at the meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study, Chicago, April 23-24, 1915.

¹"I forfatterens udvikling indtager det neppe nogen mere fremtrædende plads end et rent øvelsesarbeides," *Henrik Ibsen*, p. 88.

²Lescofier, p. 300: "Ces détails seraient négligeables si l'on ne voyait Ibsen faire effort pour manier une intrigue compliquée. Il échoue en 1852; il réussira deux ans plus tard dans *Dame Inger*. Dans l'entervalle, il avait appris des Danois et surtout de Scribe l'art d'agencer une fable, et de rejeter dans le passé un secret dont la signification menaçante grandit avec le drame."

But the influence of the Danish Romantic School upon Ibsen's literary ideals in the early 50's has received a rather brief but sound and scholarly treatment by Fredrik Paasche in his article upon *Gildet paa Solhaug* (cf. bibliography) in which he also discusses (pp. 56 f., 66 f.) *Sankthansnatten* with reference to Ibsen's Romantic ideals. Paasche has here undoubtedly hit the truth in many cases where Jæger was at fault. But to Paasche's work should be supplemented, at least in outline, a history of this type of literary persiflage which *Sankthansnatten* represents and its close connection with the early Romantic Movement in Germany. The following article is meant to supply much which Paasche has not given, as well as to emphasize the great importance of connecting the German Romantic Movement with the Danish Romanticists, from whom Ibsen borrowed this type of satirical comedy.

I

No other work reveals, as does *Sankthansnatten*, the struggle of literary ideals through which the young Ibsen was passing up to his stay in Bergen, 1851. Fredrik Paasche points out the similarity between Ibsen's work and Heiberg's *Syvsoverdag* (*Romantiske Komedie i 3 Akter*, 1840) and attributes the close imitation of Heiberg to the fact that Ibsen wrote this work during his stay in Copenhagen in 1852, where he came into personal contact with the Danish poet. Undoubtedly this is the reason why Ibsen imitated in *Sankthansnatten* the general form and structure of Heiberg's *Syvsoverdag* but the impulse to write the comedy must have originated from other convictions than those which Ibsen had derived from the Danish author, for there is sounded in *Sankthansnatten* a deep note of unrest and dissatisfaction with the ideals of Heiberg's school of aesthetic Romanticism.

Literary tradition and Heiberg's personal influence dictated the form of Ibsen's *Sankthansnatten*, but the work itself shows clearly that the author is out of sympathy with a certain phase of Heiberg's Romantic ideals. It is the struggle for reality which here for the first time makes itself evident in Ibsen's dramatic works. Paulsen (the counterpart of *Steier* in *Syvsoverdag*) flouts all the favorite expressions and pet hobbies of the Romanticists, including in his repertoire of terms many expressions characteristic of Welhaven (who was at this time held up as the Norwegian ideal of the Romantic Movement), such as *lindetræer*, *granelier*,

langelek, guldstrenge, mollakkorder, etc. That the play also expresses Ibsen's earlier sentiments in his *Andhrimner*-period there can be no doubt. Here³ he often upbraided the Romanticists with a lack of real understanding as to the symbolic use of nature, in that they did not actually bring the *flowers, fairies* and other phenomena of nature into a living connection with the soul and life of man; "the characters portrayed were unreal, the nymphs without poetry." Even before the time of the composition of *Sankthansnatten* he was thus strongly impressed with the unreality of Romantic poetry. To be sure he entered fully into the æsthetic appreciation of the beauties of nature, which was the real value of the *Heiberg-Welhaven* type of literature, for Heiberg undoubtedly exerted a very strong and deep influence upon him. In his *Fortale* to *Norma* (*Efterladte Skrifter*, I, 77) he even quotes⁴ Heiberg as a dramatic critic, and actually applies Heiberg's æsthetic criticism to certain phases of dramatic art (*Asylet paa Grønland*, *Theatret*; *Efterladte Skrifter*, I, 228-234, I, 243-245). That he had great reverence for the work which Heiberg had done, is evident from his poem to the Danish author at the latter's death in 1860 (*Ved J. L. Heiberg's Død*) in which he extols Heiberg as the spokesman of the North, urging both Danes and Norwegians to carry on the poet's lifework. But Ibsen evidently was opposed to the mere sentimentality of the Heiberg-type which did not connect nature's beauty with the reality of human life. In Norwegian literature, Ibsen was anticipated in this direction by *Botten-Hansen* whose *Huldrebryllupet*, printed in *Andhrimner*, like *Sankthansnatten* sought in the form of a literary persiflage to raise the tone of *true* Romanticism above the *false*. It is this tendency to mistake the vital connection of nature with man and to substitute extravagant and high-sounding language for genuine feeling that the character of Paulsen in *Sankthansnatten* satirizes. Constantly adorning himself with the tinsel of Heiberg's æstheticism he affords a most bitter travesty upon the sacred thesis of the Romanticists, who maintained that they were representing in literature the *national*

³ Cf. especially *Andhrimner*, 1851, *Huldrrens Hjem*, Samlede Værker, X, p. 326.

⁴ "Stabell er naturligvis Intriguestykkets Helt, han er en af disse ægte dramatiske Charakterer, som Heiberg omfaler, 'som man mere maa gjætte sig til end anskue og omsider ved Stykkets Slutning standse der, hvor man af Begyndelsen at dømme mindst skulde vente der'."

feeling and character. Paulsen is the first caricatured prototype of *Peer Gynt* whom Ibsen later selected as a representative of the Norwegian national character in the 60's. Paulsen's shallowness and egotism, furthermore, foreshadow the ignoble character of *Hjalmar Ekdal*, while his politic adroitness reminds us strongly of the versatile, but worldly *Steensgaard*. Prosaic to his very fingertips he parades himself as an æsthetic connoisseur of the first magnitude. Much that was national and much also that is human is contained in this character whom Ibsen chose as his mouthpiece in protest against the so-called "national" tendency of Norwegian Romanticism during the 50's. The sharp conflict between *Realism* and *Idealism* is foreshadowed here. This conflict grew constantly more intense within Ibsen's breast,—even in *Olaf Liljekrans* (1856) its progress is clearly marked,—until at last we find him as the great searcher for Truth and the founder of the Modern Realistic School of the drama. Paulsen's cynical remarks about theory and practice, love and marriage find stronger expression, as this conflict between *Idealism* and *Realism* progresses, in *Kjærlighedens Komedie* (1862), with which Ibsen was occupied, however, as early as 1858.

When the young couples in *Sankthansmatten* enter the garden for tea, Paulsen with the vision of the Romanticist, converts the garden into a forest, in which the primitive state of man is realized after the fashion of Rousseau. Inspired by the flattering admiration of Juliane and the other disciples of nature-worship, he expounds the soul of his Romantic doctrine. St. John's Eve is to reveal this in its ideal form, viz., *nature* and the *fairy*. In his ever restless longing for love, for a love which should never be fully requitted and thus become eternal, he has selected the *fairy* (*Huldren*) as the most fitting expression of a national character.

Act I, Sc. 14

Paulsen. Men min Kjærlighed maatte naturligviis være folkelig — jeg valgte det Nationaleste vi har. Kan De gjætte, hvad det er?

Juliane. Det Nationaleste?—Ja, det er en Budeie.

Paulsen. Nei nei, jeg siger Dem—ingen Budeie!—Det er Huldren!

But upon discovering that the fairy has a tail, his æsthetic senses are so shocked that, despite his deep and passionate love, he feels

obliged to renounce⁵ her—for a disciple of Heiberg it would really be improper to admire such an ugly being.

The fairy in *Sankthansnatten* is a travesty upon the Romantic ideal of fairy-lore. We feel that Ibsen is here out of sympathy with the use which the Norwegian Romanticists made of fairy-lore; did this use interpret the Norwegian national sense of folk-tradition?

Johannes Birk and *Jomfru Anne*, who have drunk the magic potion, see the inner significance of the folk-scenes introduced before the company on St. John's Eve. Their sound Romantic vision is in strong contrast with the Philistine attitude of *Paulsen* and *Juliane* who praise only the outward form of the dance and the gestures of the players, exactly that *ydre Skin* of which the other two have lost sight: *nei men jeg havde dog aldrig troet at vore Folkedandse kunde være saa ægte nationale, saa—Vil De bare lægge Mærke til disse Trin, disse Bevægelser.* In the crowd of people depicted in the folk-scene a soldier is present; he bows gracefully to a young girl. Paulsen straightway exclaims enthusiastically that "this pleasant mixture of all classes of people gives the picture its rounded form"; he feels that he has before him the true picture of poetic life. Whereupon Juliane replies sympathetically that it is really "a good thing to have a poetic temperament."

ACT II, SC. 5

Paulsen. Saadan skal det være!—Alle Klasser i en gemytlig Blandning;—først faar Billedet denne—denne afrundede Form, denne—Nei, det er mærkværdigt, hvor jeg finder mig tiltalt; og medens vi sidde her med et aabent Blik for det Digteriske i Livet, saa ligger rimeligviis Birk og de Andre og sove paa deres grønne Øre, eller drømme en eller anden triviel Drøm—

Juliana. Ak ja, et poetisk Gemyt er en god Ting—det er vist og sandt.

But contrary to Paulsen's surmise, Birk and Anne are really there and are witnessing not *Liden Karin og Bjærgkongen* but "*Young Erik* taking leave of his beloved *Svanhilde*." Thus Paulsen and his sentimental worshipper, Juliane, represent an excellent travesty upon the outward show and fantastic bombast of the Norwegian Romanticists.

⁵ Here we are again reminded of *Peer Gynt* who renounced his troll-maiden, when he was obliged to take on the troll's tail which should convert him permanently into a beast.

Before witnessing these folk-scenes, Paulsen with adroit sophistry tried to expound the *raison d'être* of Romantic poetry. Romantic poetry, he says, infuses nature and the fairy with life, thereby converting them into a symbol of deep philosophical and artistic significance in literature.

ACT I, SC. 7

Paulsen. Jeg for min Part betragter nu Nisser og Haugfolk og Sligt som symboliske Begreber, hvormed de gode Hoveder i gamle Dage udtrykte deres Ideer, som de ikke kunde gjengive med den rette videnskabelige Betegning. See, derved bliver nu Naturen saa interessant—saal philosophisk betydningsfuld.—Hvad vare vel Sagnene og Eventyrerne, naar ikke vi, som—som have faaet et poetisk Øje, forstode at lægge noget Betydningsfuldt—noget Philosophisk i dem, som—

It was exactly this which Ibsen evidently felt the Romanticists were failing to do, just as Paulsen failed to see the inner significance of the folk-scenes on St. John's Eve.

That Ibsen felt this defect, is evident from the effort he made in his own poetry to unite symbol with reality; yet he did not fully succeed. Four years later (1856) *Gildet paa Solhaug* appeared. Here fairy-lore, legend and poetry are interwoven, but this world of fantasy is not made real. *Gudmund* and *Signe* are truly modern characters, who are in fact struggling through a realistic problem in which they merely clothed their thoughts and feelings in the garb of Romantic ballad poetry. We do not feel that they actually believe in these fairy-stories but that such is only the means for expressing their deep and violent passions. In a word, the characters evidently look upon fairy-lore much in the same light as Ibsen did himself, or for that matter as we ourselves do today. Even in *Olaf Liljekrans* (1856), *Olaf* and *Svanhild* awaken with a painful sense of self-consciousness from those beautiful idyls and flights of idealized fantasy in which they had previously indulged; it was all a wonderful dream. Ibsen never succeeded in uniting reality and fancy. Instead, the two forces became more and more irreconcilable. Not until *Brand* (1866) did the first great break come between these two irreconcilable views of life and art, but the undertone of the struggle was heard as early as *Sankthansnatten*. Paulsen certainly sounds this note when he refers to the "demonical" power (later travestied in the character of *Molvik*) which has entered his soul and filled his whole being with doubt and discord.

ACT I, SC. 14

Paulsen. Min Oprindelighed, min Primetivitet—mener jeg—var tabt; jeg maatte indtage et negativt Standpunkt ligeoverfor Menneskeheden. Jeg begyndte med at nedlægge min Sjæl i Theaterkritiker og Korrespondentartikler for Provindspressen, som—nok sagt—jeg gik bestandig videre paa denne negative Bane. Lidt efter lidt ansatte der sig inden i mig noget Mørkt, noget Djævelblændet—Dæmonisk skulde jeg sagt—noget vist—lad mig kalde det Menneskeforagt, noget Byrons. Heraf kommer denne Splitelse, denne Disharmoni, som man bemærker i mit Væsen.

All this struggle hearkens back to Ibsen's early days connected with the theater and the press. That bitterness and contempt for common humanity (*noget Mørkt. noget Djævelblændet-Menneskeforagt*) which afterwards gave the poet his peculiarly individual stamp, is now finding its first expression. Paulsen's sudden aversion for the *Hulder* is due to his objective, critical attitude which results in his discovery of the tail and thereby in his disillusionment concerning her beauty. We may believe that the same was true of Ibsen, that his struggle for reality and the truth made him see in the fairy something different from the idealizations of Heiberg and the Danish Romanticists. Ibsen reminds us here that a *Hulder* is not the beautiful creature which Paulsen after the fashion of the Danish Romanticists had conceived her to be.

That Ibsen, furthermore, felt that the Romanticists enjoyed undue glory and a slavish admiration simply by reason of emphasizing the element of sentimentality and unreality is evident from Jørgen's remark concerning Paulsen, whom he knows to be a poet of the deepest Romantic dye, steeped in fairy-lore and sentiment.

ACT I, SC. 5

Jørgen. Ja vel er han Digter, og det en ægte Digter—mørk og vild han er især stærk i det Nationale. . . . Rigtignok har han ikke offentliggjort Noget endnu, men Alle ere enige i, at det vil blive noget Udmærket, naar det først kommer.

The only recommendation necessary for a work was to be assured that it was a product characteristic of the prevailing Romantic ideals.

As early as 1850 in his poem *Til Norges Skjalde*, Ibsen gave expression to his dissatisfaction with the use which the Norwegian poets made of remote antiquity. As Paasche points out (*Gildet paa Solhaug*, p. 52), he did not here attack the Romantic Movement as a

whole, but objected simply to the fact that Romantic ideals were not brought into living contact with the present, a criticism in keeping with his many articles in *Andhrimner* directed against the mistaken notion as to the connection of nature and fairy-lore with the realities of life. In this poem of 1850 he appeals to the poets to lay aside the ruined remains of the dead past and devote their song to the living people of the present, who demand of the poet's inspiration an interpretation of their own joy, sorrow and longing.

Hvi sværme I, Skjalde! For Fortidens Fjerne,
 For skrinlagte Old med de smuldrende Minder,—
 Et Billed saa mat som den Lysning der rinder
 I dæmrende Nat fra en Skysløret Stjerne?—
 —Er ikke den Gnist som I eie da kun
 En Gave jer skjænket til Nytte for Folket,
 Der kræver af Skjaldens begeistrede Mund
 Sin Smaerte, sin Lyst og sin Længsel fortolket.

The last verse of this poem certainly does not indicate, as Jæger⁶ thought, that Ibsen was opposed to the direction which Welhaven had given to Norwegian literature.

O, fagre Gestalter i Nuet jo vinke
 Fra Dalen, fra Fjeldet, fra Vinter og Sommer,
 Ha, see I ei skatten saa glimrende blinke,
 —En Folkelivsdigtning med deilige Blommer!

The whole tone of this verse is a glorification rather than a denunciation of Welhaven's ideals. Ibsen was never opposed to the æsthetic appreciation of nature but as time went on, he began to feel more and more that the Romanticists failed to establish a living connection between nature and human life. His articles in *Andhrimner* and his travesty upon the Romantic conception of nature and of the fairy in this lyrical polemic *Sankthansnatten*, showed him to feel that the high-sounding language and extravagant sentiment connected with nature worship could not unite nature with the reality of life with which the human heart is ever struggling. The Romanticists were substituting show and bombast for real feeling; they were holding up the tinsel for the pure gold. Although in the poem, *Til Norges Skjalde* (1850), Ibsen refers to nature as *en Folkelivsdigtning*, that which in other words he feels to be the only fit theme for national poetry, yet the method of

⁶ Jæger, p. 51: "Forøvrigt staar Ibsen uberørt af retningen, ja han stiller sig endog med fuld bevidsthed i et modsætningsforhold til den."

treatment which nature received at the hands of the Romanticists led him in *Sankthansnatten* (1852) to hold up to ridicule "the most national we have." The fairy-hob-goblin world is not, as with Welhaven, a world of delicious, bewildering fantasy but proves upon examination to be a deception like Paulsen's *Hulder* with her ugly animal tail.

As early as *Sankthansnatten* he seems to me to be seeking a solution for the national literary expression different from those conceptions which he found in Welhaven and Heiberg, although he is still enthralled with the beauty of their creations. This beauty he acknowledges, for he himself continues to use the legend and lore of ballad poetry with all its alluring charm. Even before the time of *Catiline* he had said in a theatrical critique regarding the true function of a national poet: "A *National Writer* is one who gives his work a predominant note which finds an echo in every mountain and valley, every cliff and strand, and above all in *Ourselves*." Ibsen undoubtedly felt himself to be a national poet but evidently "the predominant note" of the Heiberg-Welhaven Romantic School did not now find its echo within him. He must turn elsewhere in search of it. He must have been impressed with the fact that this type of poetry did not express the reality of life, for he strove for a time to connect legend and nature with reality by introducing his characters into the realistic problems of life. Failing in this he was driven into another phase of the Romantic Movement (viz., *the Viking drama*), which had temporarily been suppressed by his greater interest in nature and fairy-lore but which now more nearly approached his realistic conception of life and his ideal expression of the Norwegian National spirit. But before analyzing this new phase of literary activity upon his part, it may be well first to consider the outward as well as the inward causes which led up to his interest and activity in the Saga-literature.

The realistic tendency in literature had been in the 50's constantly gaining ground upon the Continent. The new School was gaining headway in Germany under the leadership of Pole Dawison in Dresden. In Copenhagen Høedt was laboring in the same direction. Høedt, to be sure, still emphasized *nature* and Dawison *feeling* as the soul of poetry but they both struggled against the unreal and declamatory in the Romantic School. When Ibsen visited Copenhagen in 1852 he saw both Høedt and Dawison play Hamlet, and Høedt he also had the pleasure of seeing in

Scribe's comedy, *La Bataille des Dames*. All this must have affected Ibsen's literary ideals.

But more than this was the influence of the Norwegian Scientific Renaissance which had rapidly been gathering force in the 50's. The Norwegian nation was awakening to a proud self-consciousness and was seeking to express itself.

As is well known, *P. A. Munch* and *R. Keyser* were establishing the significance of Norway's past history and of Old Norse literature, upon which the Danish Romantic School looked with scornful and envious eyes. "*Munch's* navn nævnes i almindelighed ikke med kjærlighet i Danmark," said Ibsen at Munch's grave, June 12, 1865. Norway was, in fact, instead of Denmark, becoming the center of Scandinavian interest. Then there was the epoch-making work of Ivar Aasen in a linguistic way and of Asbjørnson, Moe and Landstad for the folk-tradition.

In 1857, Ibsen endeavored to Norwegianize the language of *Fjeldfuglen*, a Romantic opera remodeled after *Olaf Liljeekrans*. That he later in *Peer Gynt* satirized the *landsmaal* in the ridiculous figure of the *Huhu* does not prove that Ibsen was out of sympathy with the work of Ivar Aasen, toward whom he looked with great reverence—he refers to him, for example, (X, 496) as "*vor store autoritet*"—, but that he believed, as did *Biørnson*, that the adoption of the *landsmaal* as the official tongue and the gradual remoulding of the Norwegian language in the direction of native tendencies were two entirely different things.⁷ Ibsen's orthography and vocabulary give ample evidence of this, in that they were gradually becoming more and more Norwegian. In fact, he had constant reference to Aasen's Dialect Dictionary, which he kept continually at hand during his first stay in Italy. But the extravagant pretensions of the "*Maalstrævere*" that the Old Norse tongue could be revived in the form of a national dialect was in his eyes an ultra-national and ridiculous fanaticism. Even as early as 1852, Ibsen made evident reference to this in *Sankthansnatten* where he introduces Paulsen⁸ as the founder of the "*Society for the Restitution of the Old Norse Tongue*."

⁷ For this whole question compare Dr. Seip's article "Henrik Ibsen og K. Knudsen." *Edda* I. pp. 145-163.

⁸ Dr. Seip suggests (*ibidem*, p. 145, footnote 2) that the prototype of Paulsen in this passage is *Knud Knudsen*, who in the fall of 1852 became the founder and president of "the Linguistic Society" (*Sprogforeningen*). This society grew out of *Studentersamfundet*, whose aim at first was purely literary.

ACT I, SC. 5

Jørgen.—Du kjender ham vist af Bladene, Juliane! Det er Kritikeren Julian Paulsen—han er meget bekjendt derinde i Christiania. Det er ham som er Stifteren af *Selskabet til Nørønatungens Restitution*.

But the tendency to nationalize the Norwegian language in the direction which Ivar Aasen had indicated was accepted by Ibsen as one of the tenets of the Norwegian Romantic faith. It was a mark which distinguished the language of Norway from that of Denmark and which was in keeping with the spirit of national individuality.

Asbjørnsen, Moe and *Landstad* had revealed to the world that the Norwegian people were not—as the preceding generation had believed—destitute of a folk-tradition, which was of as highly poetical, historical and artistic worth as that of Denmark or of any other nation. Though still within the fetters that literary tradition had laid upon him, Ibsen showed even in the 50's that "the national" was finding expression within him. Even in *Sankthansnatten* the folk-songs, introduced after the manner Heiberg's *Syvsoverdag* (*Konning Volmer drager af Sted paa Jagt*), are chiefly taken from Norwegian sources (cf. Paasche, p. 16f.). In the same year (1850) *Rypen i Justedal* was modeled after Faye's *Justedalsrypen* and in *Gildet paa Solhaug* (1856) his folk-songs are almost entirely founded upon Landstad's famous collection of 1853. In 1857 in his celebrated essay upon ballad poetry, *Kjæmpesvisen og dens Betydning for Kunstsposien* Ibsen, in his enthusiasm, went so far as to maintain not only that of all types of literature the heroic ballad was the most suitable for dramatic purposes, but that Norwegian ballad-poetry in particular bore a more archaic stamp than did the Danish or the Swedish and for that reason was the most characteristic of the ancient Norse. He afterwards made a collection of Norwegian folk-legends,⁹ traveling about continually in Norway; in 1857 he took a trip up over Valdres and in 1862 made a more extensive journey through Western Norway.

Ibsen was seeking an expression for "the national" which he did not find in his Danish models; the Norwegian background was gradually forcing its way up through the maze of Danish folk-lore

⁹Four of these legends (X, 474-480), taken down by Ibsen from the lips of the peasants, are still preserved.

and Danish literary tradition. The scientific search into Norway's past and the revelation of her national worth began to supply for him more of a national reality than did Heiberg's aestheticism or Welhaven's fairy-lore and prepared the way for a change in the direction of the Saga-literature.

As early as 1849-50 in his Grimstad days, Ibsen was at work upon a Viking drama, called *Olaf Trygvesøn* (Breve I, II, pp. 58-59) and also wrote a little one-act play of the same nature, entitled *Normannerne*, which in the next year (1850) he developed further into *Kjæmpehøien* in close imitation of Oehlenschläger. This was again revised in 1854 when he introduced it to the Norwegian theater at Bergen. But his interest in the Viking drama seems to have been temporarily thrust into the background by his still greater interest in folk-lore and ballad-poetry—we note this in his verses to the Norwegian poets, *Til Norge's Skjålde* (1850), in which he admonishes them to lay aside the smouldering remains of the past and devote their gifts to *interpreting nature*—until his increasing dissatisfaction with Heiberg's aesthetic ideals and his struggle for reality and national expression called forth again the saga-literature as an expression of the new national consciousness.

The Viking drama offered material for a much more realistic treatment than did ballad-poetry. The saga was a preëminently Icelandic production and thus the particular pride of Norway. Written in prose it gave opportunity for a clear, straightforward and objective treatment in the drama. In fact, Ibsen's marvelous dramatic talent first comes to light in the effective, laconic style and straightforward treatment which he gave the Viking drama. Here he found greater room for character delineation and for the expression of the deepest passions of the human heart. *Hjørdis* and *Dagny*, *Haakon* and *Skule*, *Fru Inger* and *Nils Lykke* become the representatives of modern men and women, whose passions and weaknesses foreshadow the long line of figures who later are depicted in the light of the living world of today. In the Viking drama Ibsen approaches his later realism by virtue of his character delineation, his objective treatment and pithy, laconic style which made his work, although modeled after Oehlenschläger, distinctly superior to the bombast, verbosity and Romantic character of the Vikings in the Danish drama. The national tone of *Hærmændene* or of *Mellem Slagene* affords the strongest possible

contrast to Paulsen's *Hulder*, whom Paulsen tells us he loves as the *most distinctively national thing* in existence, bestowed upon him by the Norwegian nation in a collection of national fairy stories as a sort of food for his Heiberg-aesthetic nature to feed upon: "det er *Hulden*,—det *Nationaleste vi har*." We may safely assume that Ibsen felt it was certainly not "det *Nationaleste vi har*," although at this time he was unable to substitute anything better. Thus even as early as 1852, it is evident that Ibsen was not in full sympathy with the Heiberg-Welhaven ideals, though he was still under their influence. The *Hulder* could not symbolize to Ibsen all that it did to Heiberg and his followers. His struggle for *reality* and *national expression* accounts for what Jæger¹⁰ calls in *Sankthansnatten* "a curious mixture of Realism and National Romanticism without a sure foothold either in Reality or in Romanticism." *Sankthansnatten* thus affords, as do all of Ibsen's works, an expression of the author's literary development and ideals. His early struggle through the 50's in the direction of Norwegian Nationalism, growing out of the Danish Romantic School, finds expression in this little lyrical polemic, which, despite its form, is radically different in tone from its Danish prototype. The question of Norwegian nationalism was one of the most vital problems with which Ibsen struggled. Later in 1866-67 it received literary expression in his great poetic dramas, *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*. In spite of the opposite standpoint from which Ibsen viewed this question in these two works, nevertheless the question at issue was fundamentally the same.¹¹ Here again Ibsen found, as in Paulsen's *Hulder*, that "the most national we have" was far below the idealized conception which he had cherished of the Norwegian nation; a cowardly, self-satisfied isolation, an inability to put into action the heroic ideals of their Norse forefathers, and an egotistical conviction of an inherent national superiority. As a national poet Ibsen felt "the call" to express the great gap between idealized sentimentality such as the Norwegians cherished towards their valient Viking ancestors and the

¹⁰ Jæger, p. 86: "Alle de ydre nationaler attributter, som tiden satte saa stor pris paa, var i hans øjne kun udenpaahængt flitterstas. Men som digter var han endnu ikke i stand til at gjennemføre dette standpunkt og derfor blev den første dramatiske frugt af den nationale bevægelses indflydelse paa ham en underlig blandning af realisme og national romantik uden sikkert fodfæste hverken i virkeligheden eller romantiken."

¹¹ Compare Christian Collin, Ibsen's "Peer Gynt", *Samtiden*, 1913, pp. 593-613.

actual type of men and women in Norway in the 60's with their weak will and pusillanimous, egotistical character. Early in the 50's he saw too that there was a difference between the *Hulder* and Heiberg's æsthetic effusions on the one hand, and national character and the reality of life on the other. The great struggle of his life for truth, reality, art and the literary expression of the national character thus finds its first dramatic expression in *Sankthansnatten*.

II

Johan Ludvig Heiberg (1791-1860), the author of *Syvsoverdag* after which Ibsen modeled his *Sankthansnatten*, was the most efficient writer of the *Vaudeville Comedy* in Denmark; in fact, his careful study and masterful productions of this type of literary study raised him to the position of the highest importance for the Danish stage. The *Vaudeville (Opéra-Comique)* was of French origin, which Heiberg had the opportunity to study at first hand during his sojourn in Paris. It consisted of a sort of fusion between the *Opera* and the *Comedy* and often served, in its capacity as a mock tragedy, as a very effective literary form for the expression of satire and caricature. It was imitated extensively in Germany, especially by *Tieck* and the young *Goethe* (cf. *Erwin and Elmire*, *Claudine von Villa Bella*) in the so-called "Singspiel." Heiberg defended its use and its significance in particular for the Danish stage in his celebrated essay (1826): "*Om Vaudeville som dramatisk Digtart og om dens Betydning paa den danske Skueplads.*" The loose form and hocus-pocus character of the play with its confused arrangement of events gave it a plebeian stamp to which many took offense. Heiberg, however, endeavored to give it a dignified place upon the Danish stage, thereby continuing the Holberg-comedy, of which the Danish nation was justly proud. Under Heiberg, too, the satirical farce in general gained great headway. The satirical trend of the Danish Vaudeville (*Syngespil*) had already been anticipated by Oehlenschläger in his satirical comedy, *Sankthansaften-Spil* (1802). Upon the title page of this play, which appeared in a volume of miscellaneous productions under the general title of *Digte*, Oehlenschläger dedicates his work in Goethe's well known words:

Was ich irrte, was ich strebte,
was ich litt und was ich lebte—
sind hier Blumen nur im Strauss'
Göthe.

Oehlenschläger belonged in part to the German Romantic Movement¹² and was influenced especially by Goethe with whom he afterwards came into close personal contact. Goethe's early satirical comedies undoubtedly furnished Oehlenschläger the form and many individual features of *Sankthansaften-Spil*. A general comparison of *Sankthansaften-Spil* with Goethe's satirical comedies will suffice in order to show Oehlenschläger's indebtedness to the former, without going into individual details. In *Das Jahrmarktfest zu Plundersweilern* and in *Pater Brey*, both modeled after the fashion of Hans Sachs' "Fastnachtspiele," Goethe satirizes the vain sentimentality of *Leuchsenring* and the *Darmstädter Kreis*, who were literally *durchtränkt von Georg Jacobi's süsser Milch und Klopstockischem Tränenwasser* (Bielschowsky, Goethe, I, 148). In his *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit* he again satirizes the unreal sentiment in the Romantic Movement. Oehlenschläger, after the same fashion of the *Fastnachtspiel*, takes occasion in *Sankthansaften-Spil* to satirize the Rationalistic opponents of the Romantic School; defending the new Movement which glorifies nature and freedom from literary constraint, among whose exponents he mentions especially *Shakespeare*, *the Schlegels*, *Tieck*, and *Goethe*. The general form of the play suggests Goethe's *Das Jahrmarktfest zu Plundersweilern*. Tieck's satirical comedies also show an influence upon Oehlenschläger's play. Like *Tieck* in his *Der Gestiefelte Kater*, Oehlenschläger holds up to ridicule the superficial *Rührstücke* of *Iffland* and *Kotzebue*, which had afflicted the Danish as well as the German stage, by introducing a puppet-show after the fashion of the *Bürgerliches Trauerspiel*.

Heiberg, too, entered with great vigor into the literary strife of his day and in his satirical comedies (cf. especially *En Sjæl ester Døden*, Nye Digte, 1841) launched many a philippic against Oehlenschläger, Ingemann, Grundtvig and others. His *Julespøg og Nytaarsløjer* (1816), which he styled as "a continuation of Oehlenschläger's *Sankthansaften-Spil*," is written precisely after the fashion of Goethe or Tieck. His *Syvsvoerdag* (1840), a Romantic comedy written in imitation of the French Vaudeville, was not essentially a satirical farce, being in reality only a *Gelegensheitsgedicht* in honor of the Royal House of Kristian VIII, but its form was nevertheless practically the same as that of a satirical farce,

¹² Cf. W. K. Stewart, *Oehlenschläger's Relation to German Romanticism*. Pub. of the Soc. for the Advancement of Scan. Study, Vol. II, No. 1.

such as, for instance, Oehlenschläger had employed in his *Sankthansaften-Spil* or Hostrup¹³ in his *Student Comedies*. In all these there is the loose arrangement and farcical tone characteristic of the comedy; in fact the *Syngespil* itself was only a type of musical comedy.

When Ibsen wrote his *Sankthansnatten* (1852) the form of the work was suggested by Heiberg's *Syssoverdag*, but out of this type of Vaudeville comedy he fashioned a satirical polemic directed against the Heiberg-Welhaven æsthetic ideals concerning the Romantic fairy and nature-worship, much in the same manner as Oehlenschläger in his *Sankthansaften-Spil* had done towards the opponents of the Romantic School, or as Heiberg himself had done in his *Julespøg og Nytaarsløje* towards Ingemann's poetry. Oehlenschläger's influence upon the Romanticist Ibsen is too well known to deserve special comment. It may be safely assumed that Ibsen was acquainted with Oehlenschläger's *Sankthansaften-Spil* (as the titles of the two works suggest), as well as with his extensive productions connected with the saga-literature and Viking drama. Indeed, there is one passage in Ibsen's work which may have had its origin in Oehlenschläger's *Sankthansaften-Spil*.

Here Maria, the young sentimental maiden, has fallen in love in true Romantic fashion, but she has been cruelly forbidden by her mother any intercourse with her idealized lover. Filled with longing for her lover and overcome by grief she gives vent to her feelings in the tragic song of *Thekla* (Schiller's *Wallenstein*, *Picc. III, 7*), for whom, when love was gone, life had lost its real content:

Ak, Hiertet er dødt, og hvorhen hun seer,
Er Intet, Intet at ønske meer.
"Du Hellige! Kald da dit Barn til dit Bryst:
Mig har jo alt henrykt den jordiske Lyst,
Jeg har jo alt elsket og levet."

With her lover's picture in her hand, she laments like Thekla (*Wallenstein's Tod*, IV, 12) the intervention of that cold and unfeeling hand of Fate which separates two loving hearts.

¹³ In Hostrup's *Mester og Lærling* (1851-52) a despised poet seeks his ideal exactly as does Paulsen in *Sankthansnatten*. Here too the motif of the magic salve appears.

"En grusom Skiebne, Kold som Jern, sit Gitter
I mellem tvende unge Hierter trænger,
Hvem Himplens Harmonier sammenslynger."

"Da kommt das Schicksal—roh und kalt
Fasst es des Freundes zärtliche Gestalt, etc.

Thekla is here held up as the ideal of womanly love. Her unselfish devotion and ideal character serve as a model for a young woman's heart to follow, while her tragic fate elicits the sympathy of all true lovers. The Romanticists could hardly have chosen a more classic example of true love. Maria cherishes this ideal which gives her Romantic temperament the full expression of what her heart feels. Thekla becomes thus a high-sounding, tragic name of which Ibsen likewise makes use in his *Sankthansnatten*. When Fru Berg mentions her intention to tear down the log cabin which has stood for generations on her estate, Juliane, for whom everything has a sentimental reminiscence, takes serious objection. For her the old log cabin means a world of Romantic fantasy, where hob-goblins play and where perhaps some beautiful, young maiden has dwelt *with an ideal name like Thekla or Linda* (here she makes an alternative which adds to the force of the parody since *Linda* is a common Swedish name—Juliane had been reading Swedish novels).

ACT I, SC. I

Juliane. Ja, men Moder! det vilde dog været Synd; den gamle Bjælkestue minder mig saa levende om Prestegaardene i de Svenske Romaner; der findes ogsaa gjerne en eller anden Nisse, som gaar igjen fra gamle Dage, og en smuk ung Pige med et idealsk Navn, som *Thekla* eller *Linda* eller noget Sligt—uf, hvor det er kjeldeligt, at jeg skal hedde Juliane!—det er saa almindeligt, saa—

The Satirical Comedy, as well as nearly all the features of the Danish Romantic Movement, had its origin in the German Romantic School. *Oehlenschläger*, *Steffens*, *Ingemann* and others stood for a time in the closest personal relation to *Goethe*, *Tieck*, *Schleiermacher* and the *Schlegels*. The form and content of the Danish suggest much that is found in the German Satirical comedy, such as Goethe's *Satyros*, *Das Jahrmarktfest zu Plundersweilen*, *Pater Brey*, *Der Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*, *Götter*, *Helden und Wieland*, or as Tieck's *Prinz Zerbino*, *Der Gestiefelte Kater*, etc. The satirical comedy in Denmark after Oehlenschläger gained great headway under Heiberg who attached to it a greater literary

importance than Oehlenschläger did. Heiberg's constant and bitter literary feuds no doubt furnished him an additional impulse. Thus Ibsen found in Heiberg's *Syvsoverdag* the traditional form for a satirical polemic, but his literary ideals even at this early date (1852) were nevertheless at variance with the prevailing taste of Heiberg and the Danish Romantic School. The Vaudeville-hocus-pocus character of *Sankthansnatten* is the outgrowth of Danish literary tradition which in turn owes its existence not only to France (the Opéra Comique) but also to the satirical farce of the German Romantic School. In this regard Oehlenschläger's *Sankthansaften-spil* and his close relation in general with *Tieck* and *Goethe*, as well as Heiberg's imitation of these two German Romanticists cannot be overlooked.

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